demonstration on production technology, pheromone traps and NPV (Nuclear Polyhydrosis Virus); integrated pest management demonstration-cum-training (IPM); distribution of Plant protection equipments; supply of sprinkler sets; farmers training and contingency for monitoring etc.

Shortage of Onions

2047. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was a shortage of onions, recently;

(b) what was the extent of shortfall in production of onion;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the shortage of onions was further complicated by market manipulators; and

(e) if so, steps taken by Government to ease the supply position of onion in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. There was a shortage of onions recently due to an estimated shortfall of 7.48 lakh tonnes in the production of onion during 1997-98 due to adverse agro climatic conditions. The supply position of onion got aggravated due to untimely rains in current Kharif season which reduced the production of major onion producing states like Maharashtra by 26% Gujarat by 18%, Uttar Pradesh by 34%, Orissa by 27% and Karnataka by 24%.

(d) and (e) The marketing of onions takes place in an open market environment where market forces play their role in response to gap between demand and supply position. In order to ease the supply position of onion, the Union Government has initiated a scheme of public distribution of onions at a subsidised rate of Rs. 10 per kg from 14.7.98 through the static and mobile outlets of Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation, Super Bazar, Apna Bazar, NCCF and Central Distributing Centres of NAFED. The Government has also banned the export of onion and put it on OGL at zero rate of duty.

Reports of Suicides Committed by Farmers

2048. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of farmers have committed suicide in the month of November, 1998 in various parts of the country since they were in heavy debt and their crops have been damaged due to natural calamities;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the concerned State Governments have failed to protect such farmers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and steps contemplated by the Union Government to adopt any strategy so that farmers throughout the country are not forced to commit suicide?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Distribution of Spurious and Inferior Quality Seeds

2049. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received complaints regarding distribution of spurious and inferior quality seeds to the farmers in the country;

(b) if so, the number of cases registered during the past two years, State-wise; and

(c) the target fixed for distribution of improved variety seeds for Kharif and Rabi crops in Gujarat during the year 1999?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (d) Some State Governments have reported receiving complaints of spurious and inferior quality seeds. Details of number of cases reported are enclosed as Statement-I.

(c) the details are given in Statement-II.